

Space and Subjectivity in the Modern and Postmodern City Novel

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Introduction

Those modern and postmodern writers who have written city novels have shown how difficult it is to sustain contemporary subjectivity in an urban space defined by fluidity and diversity. Charles Baudelaire expresses modernity's inherent ambiguity: "By 'modernity' I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable" (13). One of the earliest flâneurs, Baudelaire experiences the disappearance of the concept of inside/outside while strolling through the city: "To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the center of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world" (9). In Juan Goytisolo's *Landscapes After the Battle* (1982), a French flâneur is able to simulate the act of visiting "the star-shaped polygon" (87) by examining the metro map in his home; he can play with "space and the light-beam of possibilities it embraces" (36) while inside his private sphere. In contrast, wandering around the city outside paradoxically entails his "nonexistence" or "nonentity" (56): "no better place than a public area to conceal and serve as a cover for your activities" (140).

Indeed, we notice that transitioning from the modern to the postmodern novel implies the blurring of boundaries between privacy and publicity in the urban space. In Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), Clarissa maintains relationships by sharing her memories. However, the protagonist in *Landscapes* is not only a "voyeur" (24); he also taps his wife's telephone, thereby entering her privacy without permission. In the urban space, one is adjacent to others; a strong desire for them accelerates the confusion between private and public spaces and explains why characters typical of contemporary city novels are unstable. Civilization, with its offer of vast possibilities and choices,

has always celebrated social difference rather than assimilation, and the modern subject has founded its self-understanding on the premise that individuals' choices belong to themselves. Postmodernity reveals, however, that one is no longer coincident with even oneself and the one's desire is encroached by the desires of others. Some high-modernist and postmodernist writers seem to have responded to the development of the urban city by redefining the relationship between self and other and between individual and community in their depiction of individuals drifting in the undivided space defined by both privacy and publicity. In this paper, I will discuss the interrelationship between a postmodern subject and our developing sense of space, focusing on individuals (both characters and authors) who stroll through the double space of city and text.

The Contradiction within Modernity: Individual and Community in *Mrs. Dalloway*

Describing the city requires modern writers to create an invisible dynamism in their textual spaces. Marshall Berman suggests that to be modern is "to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one's world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction: to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air" (345). Berman's statement tells of the difficulty imposed by modernity on a restless figure trying to find a fixed self in a changing, unsettled, and unstructured space. Civilization provides the illusion that the subject can display individualism by exaggerating differences from others. Juan Goytisolo's *Makbara* (1980) parodies a delusive advertisement, which promises customers a way to cultivate their uniqueness under the motto that "the ego of every man differs from that of every other" (19):

[T]he world is changing, customs and habits vary nowadays, tastes are evolving: in our day and age a new concept of life taken over, with a quite different scale of values: to become your real, total self call upon our services!: we will immediately point out to you your most distinctive individual trait. (20)

As in Goytisolo's parodically communicated tacit understanding, the modernity in *Mrs. Dalloway* does not necessarily guarantee a difference from others,

Peter Walsh, newly arrived in London from India, is stuck by London's recent refashioning:

[T]o his eye the fashions had never been so becoming; the long black cloaks; the slimness; the elegance; and then the delicious and apparently universal habit of paint. Every woman, even the most respectable, had roses blooming under glass; lips cut with a knife; curls of Indian ink; there was design, art, everywhere; a change of some sort had undoubtedly taken place. (71)

Here, fashion is a mode that makes all faces similar. Indeed, a mode cannot tolerate difference. To be modern is to be fundamentally like all others. Each popular mode emerges alongside and relative to former popular modes and, while briefly appearing different, soon loses its attraction the moment it becomes popular, thus triggering the assimilation of its participants. Amid this rapid shifting, standing upon the slightest difference is typically modern, yet the pursuit of difference from others paradoxically leads to an adjacency to them. Many modern and postmodern city novelists clearly cannot shape their characters without using the concept of otherness. In other words, they can no longer mold their characters into autonomous subjects.

Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* depicts its heroine Clarissa as existing apart from the traditional humanist notion of the self-authored subject; she appears instead as the postmodern deconstructed subject. Woolf expresses Clarissa's divided selves through the interrelation between the open space (urban space) and the closed space (party room). As the novel opens, urban mobility is introduced from Clarissa's point of view, as she goes out for a walk in the London streets:

In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June. (4)

A female flâneur, Clarissa feels that she is just a part of the universe, one among many others, with "the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; unknown" (11); her loss of self brings healing rather than sadness. Woolf's inclusion of the commotion of this urban space, embodied by the appearance

of a motor car and an aeroplane, connects Clarissa with unknown passersby. People's conjectures about the nature of the "greatness" (16) seated in a precious car passing through the streets transforms a mixture of unrelated individuals into a social collective. People immersing themselves in the invisible gaze of an "immortal presence" (18) willingly join the ideology of "the enduring symbol of the state" (16).

The sound of an aeroplane then invades "the ears of the crowd" (20). The letters of smoke the plane writes by dropping and soaring draw people's attention again; "what word was it writing?" (21). The aeroplane does not fulfill its advertising function, however, but reminds Carrie Dempster of "foreign parts" (27), Mr. Bentley of "a symbol . . . of man's soul" (28), and Septimus of "exquisite beauty" (21). Each character fills the aeroplane with different meanings. Woolf writes the urban space where she describes Clarissa as "the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more" (11), thus strengthening Clarissa's "some effort, some call on her to be her self" (37) to be the "perfect hostess" (7) — her struggle to be "the same always, never showing a sign of all the other sides of her — faults, jealousies, vanities, suspicions" (37).

In the latter half of the novel, Clarissa's party room functions as a microcosm of the urban space. The appearance of the Prime Minister as the symbol of English society produces "a sort of stir and rustle" (172) among the party-goers. The party's success or failure is judged by the animation of the space. Clarissa takes its success to heart:

"But the noise!" She said. "The noise!"

"The sign of a successful party." Nodding urbanely, the Professor stepped delicately off. (176–77)

Woolf also creates textual fluidity by making readers examine the party space from the multiple viewpoints of Clarissa, Peter, Sally, Lady Bruton, and Ellie Henderson; the dispersion of gazes in the space, free from optical omnipotence, creates polyphony in the text. Readers cannot directly experience mobility in the party space, but their sharing in the characters' multiplicity of gazes helps create the polyphonic effect in the textual space.

Clarissa, at the party scene, has the "feeling of being something not herself"

(171), just as she feels on the streets of London. She accepts her anonymity, her interchangeability with others; “anybody could do it” (170), she says. She finds a “hollowness” (174), though, because her sense of “triumphs” and “intoxication” is just what other people feel (174). Clarissa’s inner contradiction finds a temporal solution when the death of a young man named Septimus moves into her space. The party room is physically limited, but it becomes open when Clarissa unexpectedly learns of the other’s suicide from one of her guests:

She felt somehow very like him — the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away . . . He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. (186)

Clarissa feels similar to Septimus but not pity for him. Septimus becomes mad through his loss of humanity or through his guilt at not feeling sorrowful about his best friend’s death (he could not feel his friend’s death as if it were his own experience). Clarissa’s positive definition of death as “an attempt to communicate” (184) seems to be related to her philosophy: “to know her, or any one, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places” (152–3). For Clarissa, death is part of the collective experience of others. Without death, without losing self, she cannot wholly understand otherness or be a part of the social chain, though she feels a temporary satisfaction when close to it.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the party room functions as a symbolic space where Clarissa is able to be closer to otherness through indirect experience of death. Therefore, Woolf negates Clarissa’s self-abnegation and allows her heroine to live: “She must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter” (186) after her meditation upon Septimus’ death.

From Work to Text — Juan Goytisolo’s *Landscapes After the Battle*

Like Virginia Woolf, Juan Goytisolo, in *Landscapes*, explores the intersection between his protagonist’s subjectivity and that of others through his depictions of urban space. Furthermore, his writing of space involves the reader’s subjectivity, as the urban space’s “creative vegetable luxuriance” (85) bears an analogical relationship to text:

The complexity of the urban environment — that dense and ever-changing territory irreducible to logic and to programming — invites him on every hand to ever-shifting itineraries that weave and unweave themselves, a Penelope tapestry, a mysterious lesson in topography. (86)

Goytisolo suggests that the city can be read as fiction. The protagonist, who has the same name as the author, loves hovering over Paris. He examines three possible ways of going to the star-shaped polygon and tries to find alternate routes:

Or Else . . . The Paris métro, like the space in which its daily hustlings back and forth are described, is vast and rich in possibilities: ramifications, intersections, connecting points, one-way journeys, roundabout itineraries, parabolas, half circles, ellipses, dead ends. To examine the map of the métro system is to yield to memory, to escape, to delirium; to accept utopia, fiction, fable: to visit the monuments, the abominations, the horrors of the city, one's own monuments, abominations, and horrors, without ever having to leave home. (87)

Here, he “reads” the city as text. Randolph D. Pope pays attention to “Or Else” and points out that this passage can serve as “a description of the novel itself” (137). In the same way that each subway station is connected with all the others in the network, the textual network of a novel can be transversed from all directions. This novel is like “an underground network” that is “simultaneous and interconnected” (Pope 137). Indeed, *Landscapes*, composed of 78 fragmentary passages, resists the dominance of temporality and gives priority to “spatial simultaneity” (76):

[T]ime no longer presses its tyranny has ceased: you may stroll through the streets write lose your way in the double space of the city and the book invent labyrinthine itineraries to disorient to disorient yourself: scatter the material of the story to the four winds entrust it to imperishables and happenstances: thistledown texts at the mercy of the breeze vehicles of a subtle pollination . . . (157)

Pope also suggests that space's advantage over time is linked to memory: “*Landscapes After the Battle* is better contemplated in the totality of memory than in the obligatory succession of reading” (137). This comment shows that

it is the reader, not the writer, who supervises the text.

In James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* (1925), minor characters or events, ostensibly mere distractions, reappear and become connected to the main stream of the narrative. Readers need good memories and a willingness to review what they have missed in order to find and enjoy the writers' playful traps; conversely, the text depends on readers who stroll through it and activate its multiple possibilities.

For the eponymous protagonist in *Landscapes*, reading is not inferior to writing. After retiring from journalism, he changes from a writer to a reader:

[I]nstead of wasting his energies doing reporting or writing articles that have no effect whatsoever on the course of wars, gulags, killings, terrorism, repression, or planned hunger, he has devoted himself for some time now — for reasons of laziness or self-protection he prefers to allow the precise length of time to remain unspecified — to the task of reading each day half a dozen newspapers in different languages from one end to the other, from the news stories and the op-ed page to the filler items, the letters from readers, and the personals columns. (45)

Collecting articles and arranging others' words as "a reader, collector, and writer of letters" (24), the character nearly confirms his originality as an artist: "As he sets his thoughts and obsessions down he is nagged by the inescapable question: is it he or I who is speaking? His vocation as a scribe has led him to assume that he is the father of the copy and insidiously to confuse himself with the author" (147).

The exchangeability of author and reader also implies the latent subversion between Goytisolo and his character. In particular, Goytisolo confuses his separation from his invention in the most private realm — sexual behavior. The character collects favorite letters from "the abundant erotic correspondence published in the personal ads" (50) every Saturday, writes shameless letters to the very young girls as an "anonymous correspondent" (66) and waits for responses from them. In many cases, Goytisolo calls his character "our hero" and refers to him using all three persons (I, you, and he). It is "I" who reads the correspondence from a girl named Agnès: "I've received a message from Agnès" (107); it is "you," though, who actually goes out to meet the girl: "You will arrive half an hour late: Agnès is waiting for you" (108). Readers

regard the queer character's shocking fantasy as a product of the author's artifice and distinguish between the character and the author's real sexual behavior. Nevertheless, the confusion between "you" and "I" disturbs the distinction of author and character. The disturbance in persons has a power to break the boundary between illusion in art and illusion in reality. Goytisolo attracts the reader's attention to himself as author through his deliberate, manipulative narrowing of the distance between author and character, reality and illusion, and art and daily life; his excessive self-consciousness arises from his purpose — to write himself who is writing: "I: the writer" / "I: the written" (157). He clearly proclaims that he writes himself, yet "the writer" is not equivalent to "the written," since Goytisolo writes others' or readers' desire. First, Goytisolo, as a representative of his anonymous readership, becomes a reader; secondly, he reads his writing; thirdly, he continues his writing, driven by what his readers require. For example, Goytisolo anticipates readers' curiosity about his character's wife, whose details are nearly hidden from readers, and thus writes about her: "The reader demands the right to see her at last, to learn her version of the facts so cleverly concealed" (118).

Thus, introducing the fictitious others' perspectives into his writing allows the author to produce a textually polyphonic effect. Goytisolo cannot conceal a slight fear of or dissatisfaction with the dominance of others in his art, however, because a contemporary other is no longer the absolute, unlike God who formerly served as the Other; rather the other is always changeable — "inevitably monotonous, always trivial; replaceable and banal, the insipid fruit of chance" (149). The unspecific other's changeability implies that the subject is also unstable. Like Goytisolo, the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector focuses on the interchangeability between author and character. In *The Hour of the Star* (1977), Rodrigo, who tells the story of Macabéa, states that the narrator need not necessarily be him and that his fictitious character need not necessarily be Macabéa: "It strikes me that I don't need her either and that what I am writing could be written by another" (14). Rodrigo's repeated remarks on his writing and his clear lack of self-confidence as a writer reflect his unstable position.

The interchangeability between author and reader develops into a political issue in *Landscapes*, when a politician (who represents people's desire) functions in the same way as the author, who reflects his readers' desire. Parisians

who live in “dreary, repressive societies” (32), admire Albania’s fabricated ideal society, a “revolutionary, free, and democratic society” (33) where the Leader satisfies all desires:

The optimum solution: answer the desires of the masses by electing to the supreme office the person best suited to represent them: a man able to hear the voice of the people, to understand its aspirations and its most heartfelt yearnings, to identify completely with it. To say: I am the people, and hold a dialogue with it, with himself, in the mirror: to eliminate any and every trace of contradiction between the two, thanks to the exclusion of any sort of intermediary agencies: to acknowledge his infinite, multitudinous self, and ensure, simply and straightforwardly, its progress and its happiness. (35–6)

Here, the mixture of different individuals becomes the general public. It is impossible for a representative to fulfill everyone’s desire, but democracy is founded on a system that reduces individuals to a homogenous unit and chooses a representative of their desire. The idealistic expectation that a representative identify totally with the people risks the generation of a despotic monarch. Goytisolo parodies the horror of dictatorial government in a section of his novel, “Neither Stalin nor Trujillo nor Pol Pot: Bela Lugosi.” The dictator, seeing the endless lineup of people waiting for the opening of a museum hosting a horror film festival, decides to practice government by terror upon people who obviously yearn to “live in an atmosphere of fear and terror” (54).

The confrontation between the dictator and his people in a distorted democracy seems to be another version of the author-reader relationship in *Landscapes*. Goytisolo, as the representative of the unified collective called the readership, creates “our” hero. This hero embodies, though, the contradiction in democracy. In the beginning of *Landscapes*, the character rewrites the signs surrounding him into a foreign language and loves his physical closeness with the unspecified others passing each other on the streets. He seems open to other ethnicities and cultures, unlike those typical citizens who would feel offended by a foreign invasion. He is not able, however, to communicate with his wife, who should be the most specific other for him. This failure is not because the character has lost his interest in her wife, though he no longer lives with her. He simply prefers monologic to dialectical communication: he sends

poems and messages to her apartment and taps her private conversation with a surveillance microphone. The inner contradiction embodied by his distorted desire for specified others (evidenced by his peeping and tapping) and the solitude that contrasts with his familiarity with the unspecific others is similar to the dilemma of his “incorruptible idol” (53), the “leader,” who confesses his loneliness but believes himself popular among the anonymous people. The ambivalence within Goytisolo’s protagonist and the false democracy seems to reflect the author’s self-satire. His effort to receive unspecific readers’ desires and produce the republican text space is cynically reversed into a strong self-reference. Goytisolo warns readers of the narrator’s insincerity, saying “Reader, beware: the narrator is not trustworthy” (144), thereby also paradoxically drawing readers’ attention to himself. In *Landscapes*, the author and his character are both unstable in the double space of text and city.

The Development of Media from the Street to Cyberspace

Diversifying media forms have conditioned changes in the quality of space written in city novels. Consistent with the advance from newspaper, radio, and TV, to portable telephone and computer, the urban space has expanded its domain from the level of the street to that of directionless space. The media’s evolution has influenced the concept of subjectivity, as the media manipulate the distance between the subject and the Other. In this section, I would like to discuss how the urban space, from the street to cyberspace, serves to mediate otherness.

In some city novels, the street functions as a primitive medium. In James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, the invisible God is materialized in a shout in the street:

— The ways of the Creator are not our ways, Mr. Deasy said. All history moves towards one great goal, the manifestation of God.

Stephen jerked his thumb towards the window, saying:

— That is God.

Hooray! Ay! Whrrwhee!

— What? Mr. Deasy asked.

— A shout in the street, Stephen answered, shrugging his shoulders.

(32)

Marshall Berman hints at why God would be embodied in a shout in the

street:

Throughout the age of Haussmann and Baudelaire, and well into the twentieth century, this urban romance crystallized around the street, which emerged as a primary symbol of modern life. From the small-town "Main Street" to the metropolitan "Great White Way" and "Dream Street," the street was experienced as the medium in which the totality of modern material and spiritual forces could meet, clash, interfuse and work out their ultimate meanings and fates. This was what Joyce's Stephen Dedalus had in mind in his cryptic suggestion that God was out there, in the "shout in the street." (316–17)

Joyce probably likens the flooding of otherness in the street to God as the symbol of otherness. The street is the most primitive modern medium of communication and exchange of values.

However, the street seems to represent the ambivalence of modernity. Some city novels disclose modernity's apparent power to enable the subject to become aware that she has the privilege of choosing among many possibilities while never guaranteeing an inherent identity. In Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1961), set in the Berlin in the 1920s, the square's intersection, observed by the police tower, keeps its order thanks to traffic control:

The faces of the eastward wanderers are in no way different from those of the wanderers to the west, south, and north; moreover they exchange their roles, those who are now crossing the square towards Aschinger's may be seen an hour later in front of the empty Hahn Department Store. (221)

Here, there are no significant differences among people. Döblin's description does not suggest that people all look the same but rather that people's lives are conditioned into uniformity by their homogenous society. John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* also implies that capitalism's foundational principle is human exchangeability. Dos Passos focuses on the exchangeability of mass production. At Brooks' Brothers, Jimmy's cousin, James Merivale, accidentally meets his sister's fiancé, Jack Cunningham, and discovers that they have chosen the same clothes:

'God Almighty, do you know what we've done?' cried out Cunn-

ham. 'We've bought the same suit of clothes . . . I tell you it's identically the same.'

Merivale was looking in bewilderment from Cunningham's brown trousers to his own, the same color, the same tiny stripe of red and faint mottling of green.

'Good God man two future brothers-in-law can't wear the same suit. People'll think it's a uniform . . . It's ridiculous.' (302)

The fiancé abandons his wife and finally gets married with James' sister because of his ambition. The secret of success, as shown in *Manhattan Transfer*, is the ability to anticipate the desires of others. Another character, Harry Goldweiser, is fully aware that the power to predict what will be wanted by others is crucial for a successful capitalist to have: he says, "Well a showman's business is to give the public what they want" (237). Modernity apparently allows the subject to have her own individual, essential value, but her desire will be eroded by the desires of others.

The city novels that I have mentioned depict newspapers as both the principal modern media form and a key influence upon the characters' subjectivities. In New York, Jimmy Herf is a journalist; in Dublin, Bloom produces images of objects as an advertising agent; in Berlin, Franz sells newspapers; in Paris, the protagonist plays many roles while collecting, reading, editing, and writing as a postmodern author. The newspaper juxtaposes discrete events in its homogenous space (i.e., the paper) in the process of delivering information to its many readers. It has nearly shortened the distance between sender and receiver in terms of time and space.

In *Manhattan Transfer*, Jimmy feels his identity's instability and has the urge to leave Manhattan: "The trouble with me is I can't decide what I want most, so my motion is circular, helpless and confoundingly discouraging" (163). His wife, Ellen, criticizes Jimmy's lack of a private life: "[Y]ou don't have any private life, you're just an automatic writing machine" (309). In a deeper sense, however, it is Ellen who uses her privacy for the sake of her public reputation. Ellen is good at editing information and probably embodies Mr. Snow's opinion that "it's all advertising; actors and actresses are put on the market like patent medicines" (221); as an actress, she allows others to reflect their desires. By the end of the novel, Jimmy leaves New York at last, but this

is only a temporal solution: "There's nowhere in particular he wants to go" (327), for there is no center of the modern homogenous space but the diffusion of newspapers has brought into being. Like Jimmy, Franz cannot find his place; thus, he visits the prison that has planted in his mind his individual self-consciousness. Alfred Döblin gives a temporal solution in the novel, however, in which Franz confronts otherness via his spiritual death and reconstructs the communal identity he shares with others: "I must get the habit of listening to others, for what the others say concerns me, too. Then I learn who I am, and what I can undertake" (633). Ultimately, though, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* and *Manhattan Transfer* show the difficulty of overcoming the contradiction of modernity; their characters agonize over the "illusion" that they are self-authored subjects even though they are actually determined by others.

The postmodern writer Goytisolo suggests that the subject's desire to empower himself by absorbing others involves "the ever-increasing confusion of the public and the private" (*Landscapes* 86):

Purchase, for example, an electronic device that will enable you to listen to and record any conversation within a range of five hundred yards without having to budge from your house or office. Invade your neighbors' privacy with your indiscreet microphone, discover their opinions and secrets, be certain beyond the shadow of a doubt what they really think of you. Record by remote control the conversations of your employees, the confidences and complaints of your better half, the grievances of your housemaid, hesitantly expressed in a half-whisper. Thanks to the high fidelity and precision of your watchdog minimike, you will enjoy the tremendous advantage of knowing what is hidden in their heart of hearts, of penetrating their innermost thoughts, of exploiting for your profit the mass of data and information furnished you by your electronic ear. (72–73)

This passage shows that the evolution of media is erasing the distinction between "I" and "other." The intermingling of privacy and publicity flows into debates about the difference between human and android (or AI, for "artificial intelligence") in the science fiction genre, ultimately touching upon the fundamental ethical issue — the very nature of humanity.

Postmodern films such as Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) and Alex

Proyas' *Dark City* (1998) also focus on deconstructive subjectivity. In these films, private memories are stolen or planted by others; in William Gibson's SF novel, *Neuromancer* (1984), hackers steal others' information in the database. The interrelationship between subject and other is examined in city novels whose main media vary from the street to cyberspace. In the next section, I will discuss the changes occurring in both the postmodern human subject and our spatiality, with particular focus on *Blade Runner* and *Neuromancer*.

The Borderless Space between Privacy and Publicity

The big difference between Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* and its source novel, Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) is that the director's cut of the film alludes to the suspicion that Rick Deckard, the hero who hunts replicants (androids), is also a replicant; in the novel, he is unquestionably human. Dick's prime concern is that what separates humans from replicants is the human capacity to feel empathy for others. Dick seems to believe that the ability to internalize the gaze of others is uniquely human. In the novel, the readers prove their humanity by feeling sympathy for the human Deckard, who has, in term, finally realized the replicants' humanity; the film, though, might move the audiences to have more empathy for the replicants than readers of the novel are moved to feel. Roy Batty, the replicant leader who saves Deckard's life, would seem to appeal to an audience more strongly than the dull and dubious Deckard. Janice Hocker Rushing and Thomas S. Frentz expound upon the replicants' humanity in the film: "Although no human in the film cares about any other human, the replicants care passionately for one another, plotting their survival strategies, protecting one another from discovery, and grieving over each inevitable death" (150). Roy in particular, though he kills his creator, the president of Tyrell Corp, is more human than human, "for he both recapitulates humanity's sin against the Father and at the same time demonstrates 'more life' in his act of passion than any of the so-called humans around him" (156).

However, it should be noted that the film presents the audience with the possibility that Deckard is a replicant. Despite Scott's statement that *Blade Runner* is just entertainment, the film is more radical than the source novel,

since it hints that the audience member, as well as Deckard, is a metaphorical replicant in his lack of an autonomous subjectivity.

The notion of subjectivity that *Blade Runner* produces is reflected in the design of its futuristic city. Scott was unyielding while composing the visual details that represent Los Angeles in 2019: he says, "There are certain moments where the background can be as important as the actor. The design of a film is the script" (Sammon 71). *Blade Runner* expands our sense of space in the urban city, as Scott Bukatman suggests: "a decentered and boundless space dispersed, thanks to the hovercars and rooftop chases, across all three dimensions of the urban topography" (130). David Desser observes, however, that *Blade Runner* politicizes the space in order to emphasize its social distinctions:

[T]he difference between the elite and the masses is visually dramatized by the spatial opposition High / Low. Here, the concept of the upper class is literalized. Eldon Tyrell, wealthy head of the Tyrell Corp., lives high above the city in a huge pyramid—a motif nicely demonstrated by the sequence in which Roy Batty forces Sebastian to take him to see Tyrell. Even the hero, Rick Deckard, the blade runner of the title, lives some ninety-two stories above the city. The police, representatives of power and authority, spend most of their time in hovercrafts looking down on the city. (112)

The film exploits the classical notion that high is literally more valuable than the low, which seems to be connected with physical necessity: the human constructs his relation with the world from his perspective, as nobody can naturally walk facing the sky. Thus, the film maintains our organic human orientation, and Scott's future metropolis is both multi-racial and hierarchical.

To have power means having the wider and clearer view offered by a place in the heights. Moreover, Judith B. Kerman makes clear that the act of seeing is the privilege of power in this movie. Deckard, working for the state, has the privileged sight on two levels: one is embodied by the Esper machine, which gives its user perfect, microscope-like eyes; the other is provided by the "bird's-eye views of the city he has from the police vehicle" (20). Nevertheless, Deckard, an agent of police power, cynically surrenders his private realm to the capitalist system that penetrates his inner life. Deckard proves that Rachael is a replicant by suggesting that her memories and family photos are manufac-

tured, but his own identity turns out to be uncertain. In the same way that he destroys Rachel's identity, the audience sees Deckard's identity dissolve when his colleague Gaff leaves the paper unicorn outside his apartment; Gaff knows about Deckard's implanted memory of the unicorn. The fact that private memories, the final frontier of the subject's individuality, are mere implants produces the borderless space composed through the fusion of privacy and publicity. This borderless space also appears to the audience: the big eye reflected on the huge Tyrell Corporation at the beginning of the film transcends the screen and reigns over the audience under the power of capitalistic ideology. *Blade Runner* hints to the audience that they are figuratively replicants, as is Deckard, though oblivious and working on behalf of the state.

Gibson's *Neuromancer* also seems to enact this political theme. Anne Cranny-Francis notes that the novel transforms a political conflict into a philosophical one: "Gibson's novel, *Neuromancer* (1986), is not concerned with the merging and blending of identities and positionings (by sex, gender, race, ethnicity, class, age) into a new kind of embodiment. Instead, it celebrates the 'liberation' of the mind from the 'confines' of the body" (100). Indeed, for the protagonist Case, who has once "lived for the bodiless exultation of cyberspace" (6), the body is "meat" (6). Losing his talent as a hacker, Case feels he has fallen into "the prison of his own flesh" (6). As Cranny-Francis points out, the novel replaces the binary oppositions of high/low, capital/labor, and white/colored with the opposition between mind and body. Nevertheless, Gibson probably does not disdain the body, as does his dualistic character, because *Neuromancer's* plot explores a path to anti-dualism.

The novel begins by comparing media to the city, noting that "The sky above the port was the color of television, turned to a dead channel" (3) and then presenting the visual interrelation of city (in Ninsei street) and matrix: "Get just wasted enough, find yourself in some desperate but strangely arbitrary kind of trouble, and it was possible to see Ninsei as a field of date, the way the matrix had once reminded him of proteins linking to distinguish cell specialties" (16). Matrix is compared to the urban space, but it is also described as the "non-space."

"Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of

legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts . . . A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the *nonspace* of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding . . .” (51, emphasis added)

Scott Bukatman states that “Cyberspace is a method of conceiving the inconceivable—an imaginary solution to the real contradictions of the Dataist Era” (152). Because of the impossibility of our experiencing matrix, readers may feel that matrix is the world dominated by mind, as Case asserts; Case confesses, though, that “the cyberspace matrix was actually a drastic simplification of the human sensorium, at least in terms of presentation” (55); that is, matrix as the visualization of information, cannot transcend our sense of sight.

Case, for his commission, reluctantly experiences “simstim” (55) which he has despised as “a meat toy” (55). To his surprise, the experience of experiencing Molly’s body as his own, rather than playing in the matrix, leads him to a stronger than usual level of empathy for Molly. Case shares Molly’s sight and sees the world from her viewpoint, but he cannot move Molly’s body with his mind. His temporal position and lack of subjectivity irritates him. However, the condition of humanity is to appropriate the Other’s sight and experience otherness in imagination, as I have explained with regard to *Blade Runner*.

In *Neuromancer*, sexuality seems to provide a resolution to duality in the novel. Case meets Linda, his dead girlfriend, in “a coded model of some stranger’s memory” (240) and remembers something he has “found and lost so many times” (239) in his sex with Linda: “It belonged, he knew—he remembered—as she pulled him down, to the meat, the flesh the cowboys mocked. It was a vast thing, beyond knowing, a sea of information coded in spiral and pheromone, infinite intricacy that only the body, in its strong blind way, could ever read” (239). This scene suggests the restoration of flesh: the body is more complicated and unknown than matrix in its genetic information. Gibson shows that body and mind are the two sides of the same phenomenon.

As Lance Olsen insists, the “quest for a union of opposites, for wholeness, is the key theme of *Neuromancer*” (75), Wintermute, the AI that represents “hive mind,” longs for union with another AI, Neuromancer, which represents

“personality.” The creator of *Wintermute* and *Neuromancer*, Marie-France Tessier, dreams of “a state involving very little in the way of individual consciousness” (217). Her daughter Jane explains Marie’s dream: “She imagined us in a symbiotic relationship with the AI’s, our corporate decisions made for us. Our conscious decisions, I should say. Tessier-Ashpool would be immortal, a hive, each of us units of a larger entity” (229). Through the novel, the theme of being a “part of something bigger” (206) is repeated in the images of the beehive as being like a “spiral birth factory” (126) and “corporate power” as being “a kind of immortality” (203). Both *Wintermute* and *Neuromancer* also acknowledge their deaths as individuals: *Neuromancer* says to Case, “I die soon, in one sense. As does *Wintermute*” (259).

Thus, *Neuromancer* is philosophical and political in its concern with the death of the individual. Case does not experience the temporal disappearance of his self until he succeeds in helping the union of the two AIs: Case has “the clarity and singleness of his wish to die” (262) beyond “ego, beyond personality, beyond awareness” (262). Desire for death also appears in *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, and *The Hour of the Star*. In these works, death seems to function as the collective composed of others. Case calls the unified AI, the new ruler of matrix, “God,” much as Stephen attributes a shout in the street to God:

“So what’s the score? How are things different? You running the world now? You God?”

“Things aren’t different. Things are things.”

“But what do you do? You just *there*?” Case shrugged, put the vodka and the shuriken down on the cabinet and lit a Yeheyuan.

“I talk to my own kind.”

“But you’re the whole thing. Talk to yourself?”

“There’s others. I found one already . . .” (270)

The AI’s answer is probably Gibson’s answer for the question he presents in the novel: the postmodern subject is not fixed but always renewed and involving new kinds of others. In the domain of cyberspace, the novel predicts the disruption of individualism without lament.

Conclusion

As I have mentioned, some modern and postmodern city novels and films have argued that individualism, as the prerequisite for modernity, has revealed its limitation in our highly information-oriented society. The contemporary unstable subject feels it must adjust its distance from the rapidly changing Others in urban societies. In the works I have explored, writers and directors negotiate this modern dilemma without finding absolute solutions.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa's split selves are replaced by the bipolarization of her life and Septimus' death. In *Blade Runner*, the confrontation between capital and labor is carried forward into the separation of human and android; romantic love does not appear realistic by the end of the film. Meanwhile, *Blade Runner* suggests that even its viewers are androids in the penetration of their inner realm by capitalist ideology. *Manhattan Transfer* and *Berlin Alexanderplatz* also describe capitalist suppression. Jimmy's escape from Manhattan is just a temporal solution. Franz seems to learn how to construct intersubjectivity after his spiritual rebirth. However, by novel's end, his peaceful marching with others arouses the faint fear that might turn into the march of communism or the parade of death, as imaged by the slaughter house interpolated throughout the novel. Even in *Landscapes*, behind its self-mocking writing, the distorted desire for otherness involves the danger of excessive communism. Gibson's characters are not allowed to choose: their decisions are controlled by their environment, represented in the two AIs. Case and Molly, lacking the understanding of their project, just chase the unknown Other in matrix. Gibson makes his characters obey their environments without resistance. Nonetheless, the human capacity to expand the spatial sense into the vast imaginary realm seems to be the last frontier of late capitalism. Clarice Lispector, whose writing supports her daily life, says, "My greatest experience would be to be the other of the others: and the other of the others was I" (Vieira 114). The unlimited challenge to expose oneself to otherness through writing — going down to the chaos where the signifier is not fixed with the signified but continually disinters possibilities — is the principal purpose, the *acte gratuit*, for those contemporary writers who are, themselves, drafting in a huge imaginary space.

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